TED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Secretary-General warns United Nations will be crippled if Members States do not pay assessed contributions as required by Charter; projects General Fund deficit of $240 million by end of 1995.

* Secretary-General appoints Joe Sills as Director of United Nations Information Centre in Washington, D.C., with effect from 1 December.

* Security Council should adjust UNOMIL mandate to take into account developments in peace process and experience gained in past two years, Secretary-General says.

* Emergency Relief Coordinator says Liberia will need substantial international assistance if peace is to hold; United Nations to convene Conference on country tomorrow.

* Heads of State or government of Non-Aligned Movement call for strengthening of UNCTAD as United Nations focal point for treatment of development and related issues.

* Global agricultural trade has expanded greatly in past two decades, but gains have been uneven and protectionism continues to distort markets, FAO reports.

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While some Member States have responded to appeals regarding the critical financial position of the United Nations, the situation remains bleak, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In a report to the General Assembly dated 20 October, he said the General Fund, which financed regular budget activities, was expected to show a deficit of $240 million at the end of 1995. The prospects for additional receipts for the regular budget from major contributors remained uncertain.

Unpaid contributions to the peace-keeping budget totaled almost $2.3 billion, he pointed out. The unanticipated receipt of some contributions had allowed the United Nations to make some payments to troop-contributing countries. However, the Organization was still expected to owe those

(more)

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countries $1 billion by the end of the year. The problem was exacerbated by the need to borrow available peace-keeping funds for the regular budget.

"Unless Member States resolve to pay their assessed contributions to the United Nations in accordance with their obligations under the Charter," the Secretary-General concluded, "the Organization's capacity to serve Member States will be crippled and its continued viability will be threatened.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has decided to appoint Joe Sills as Director of the United Nations Information Centre in Washington, D.C. In that capacity, he will be the leading representative of the United Nations Offices there. The appointment was announced today by the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information, Samir Sanbar. Mr. Sills, who is currently the Spokesman of the Secretary-General, will take up his new duties on 1 December.

Mr. Sanbar said the Secretary-General's decision reflected the importance he attached to the Information Centre in the Host Country. Under the leadership of Mr. Sills, the Centre would contribute to a wider understanding of the United Nations role, closer partnership with the media in Washington, and a further strengthening of the Organization's relationship with the Host Country.

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The Secretary-General has recommended certain adjustments to the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) to take into account developments in the peace process and experience gained in the past two years. In a report to the Security Council dated 23 October, he said the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) would continue to play the lead role in the peace process, while the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) would retain the primary responsibility for assisting the Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG) in implementing the military provisions of the peace agreements.

Meanwhile, UNOMIL's main functions should be: to exercise good offices to support the efforts of ECOWAS and the LNTG to implement the peace agreements; to investigate alleged cease-fire violations; to monitor compliance with the other provisions of the peace agreements; to assist in the maintenance of assembly sites and in the demobilization of combatants; to support humanitarian assistance activities; to investigate and report on human rights violations and assist local human rights groups; and to observe and verify the election process.

UNOMIL would monitor implementation of the military provisions of the Abuja Agreement and deploy its military observers with an emphasis on the most

critical task of the peace process: disarmament and demobilization. Teams of United Nations military observers would co-deploy with ECOMOG troops at assembly sites to verify the disarming of combatants. In addition, three mobile teams would be co-located with ECOMOG brigade headquarters, while a fourth would be stationed in Monrovia. The teams would investigate reported violations of the cease-fire and arms embargo, as well as the disengagement of forces.

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Liberia must have substantial international assistance if the peace established by the Abuja Agreement is to hold, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Peter Hansen, told correspondents at Headquarters today. He noted that the United Nations had appealed for $110 million to meet Liberia's "very burning, very acute" needs, and would hold a Conference on assistance to the country tomorrow. Mr. Hansen recently visited Liberia, as well as Sierra Leone and Afghanistan, in his capacity as United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator.

The civil war in Liberia had claimed 150,000 lives and turned three-quarters of the population into refugees or displaced persons, Mr. Hansen said. No family had been left untouched by the humanitarian disaster, yet the international community had not mobilized to deal with it. Money was now needed to disarm and demobilize combatants and to begin reconstruction. In addition, ECOMOG needed funding to help keep the peace.

The situation in Sierra Leone was also disastrous, Mr. Hansen continued. There were at least 1.2 million internally displaced persons in the country. No significant agricultural activity was being carried out and there were reports of severe malnutrition, particularly among children. The United Nations had appealed for a modest $14 million for Sierra Leone, of which only 40 per cent had been raised. That response was "really pathetic" considering the country's enormous needs.

Afghanistan had once been at the centre of international attention but was now being ignored, Mr. Hansen went on to say. Meanwhile, the international community had never paid sufficient attention to the emergencies in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Appeals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda had been very successful, but the crises in the two West African countries were of similar magnitude. The international response would have to be increased very significantly if the challenge were to be faced, he concluded.

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Heads of State or government of the Non-Aligned Movement have called for a strengthening of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). In a declaration adopted at thir Summit Meeting in Cartagena, Colombia, last week, they reaffirmed their support "for the mandate of UNCTAD

as the focal point within the United Nations for the integrated treatment of development and interrelated issues including trade, commodities, finance, investment, external debt, services, technology and environment."

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Global trade in agricultural products has expanded considerably in the past two decades, but the gains have been extremely uneven and markets have been plagued by intervention and protection, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). In a report entitled "The State of Food and Agriculture 1995", the FAO said the Uruguay Round Agreement had been a momentous event for agricultural trade. However, "protectionism in old and new forms" was likely to remain high unless further reductions were negotiated.

The report urged that regional trading arrangements open their markets to third countries to promote a more liberal global trade environment. However, it cautioned that if the environment were to be protected, governments should have appropriate policies to modify the behaviour of producers, consumers and markets. Without such policies, resource allocation could conflict with the objective of sustainable development.

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